

**Evaluation of the First 5 California
Children of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Project
The Migrant Education Even Start Component**

**Executive Summary
January 2007**

INTRODUCTION

In October 2003 the First 5 California Children and Families Commission funded the First 5 California Children of Migrant and Seasonal Farm Workers Project, an enhancement of the California Migrant Education Even Start Program (MEES). This report presents the results of the evaluation of the effect of that project on three- and four-year old children.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The MEES program used the *Brigance Developmental Screens* to evaluate program impact. The regional MEES staff administered to their First 5 three- and four-year-old children the Brigance and submitted the Brigance scores and related data through the MEES online reporting system maintained by the state MEES office.

- **Study Children:** Eighteen regions enrolled 3,326 three- and four-year-old children and submitted test data for 55% of them. Of these, 684 children met all the criteria to be included in the study: They were 36 to 60 months of age, received at least four hours of service (about one month in a home-based program), and had both pretest *and* post-test scores obtained from an age-appropriate Brigance test form.
- **Age of Study Children:** Study children ranged from 36 to 59.96 months, with an average 47.2 months, and a median of 46.7 months.
- **Type of Early Childhood Education Services:** 79.1% of the study children received **Home-Based** services and 20.8% received **Site-Based** services. One child, .1%, received both home-based and site-based services.
- **Hours of MEES First 5 Service:** Study children received an average of 35.4 hours of service with a median of 21 hours and a range of 4 to 600 hours. Children who received **home-based** service averaged 23 hours of service. Those who received **site-based** service received an average of 80.1 hours.
- **Enrollment Dates:** Regions enrolled the study children from July 2004 through July 2006. Half the children enrolled before October 7, 2005.
- **Comparison Cohorts:** Children with little or no service (less than four hours) comprised the comparison groups, classified by test form into three cohorts: Form 3 for three-year olds, Form 4 for four-year olds, and Form K or 5 for five-year-old children.
- **Home and Test Languages:** The regions identified Spanish as the home language of all but one of the study children. They tested all but 11 of the children in Spanish at pretest and all but 23 at post-test, with the 11 and 23 tested in English.

MAJOR FINDINGS

The MEES First 5 component met or exceeded all the specific targets contracted with the CCFC. The MEES First 5 programs across the state

- increased the hours of service to children and their caregivers by 30%.
- enrolled 2,724 more children and parents in the program than the targeted 4,700.
- created 99 new project sites statewide instead of the targeted 60 sites.
- helped an estimated 350 to 400 families receive licensed child care.
- provided transportation to 2,952 children and 3,198 parents or to program staff to visit them.
- continued to provide services through home-based programs instead of center-based programs since that fit the needs of the client farmworker families and enabled the program to provide the services more effectively.

This study revealed additional information about the MEES First 5 Program:

- nearly three in four study children received services through a home-based program.
- regardless of the type of service received, the MEES First 5 children improved significantly from pretest to post-test on the Brigance Developmental Screens. At pretest, 76% of the children scored in the at-risk category; at post-test this percentage dropped to 46%.
- children in home-based programs demonstrated significantly greater gains than children in center-based programs.
- MEES First 5 children dramatically and significantly scored higher than their same-age comparison counterparts both in average score and in the “at-risk” status of their scores.
- The program cut the percentage of at-risk scores almost in half: 76% at pretest to 46% at post-test.

CONCLUSION

The MEES First 5 component met or exceeded all of the specific targets contracted with the CCFC. Analyses confirmed that, regardless of the type of program, the children benefited significantly from the MEES First 5 services.